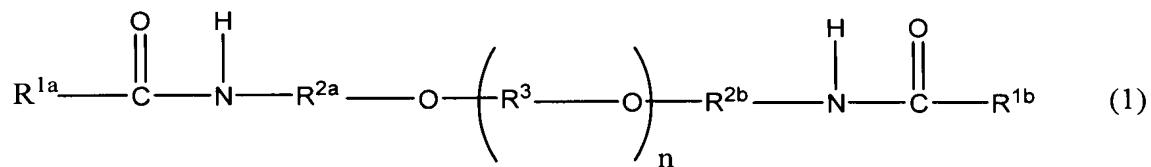


IN THE CLAIMS

Please amend the claims as follows:

Claims 1-6 (Canceled).

Claim 7 (previously presented): A method for reinforcing the water retaining ability of the horny layer or a skin barrier function and remedying skin roughness, which comprises applying, to the skin, a composition comprising an effective amount of a diamide derivative represented by the following formula (1):



(wherein, R^{1a} and R^{1b} are the same or different and each represents a C_{1-23} hydrocarbon group, R^{2a} and R^{2b} are the same or different and each represents a divalent C_{1-6} hydrocarbon group, R^3 s are the same or different and each represents a divalent C_{2-6} hydrocarbon group and n stands for 1 to 100).

Claims 8-16 (Canceled).

Claim 17 (previously presented): The method of claim 7, wherein said composition further comprises an intracellular lipid component of the horny layer.

Claim 18 (previously presented): The method of claim 17, wherein said intracellular lipid component of the horny layer is at least one member selected from the group consisting of ceramides, pseudoceramids, sphingoglycolipids, sphingophospholipids, sphingosines and

derivatives thereof, sphinganines and derivatives thereof, higher fatty acids and cholesterols and derivatives thereof.

Claim 19 (previously presented): The method of claim 7, wherein said composition is a cosmetic composition.

Claim 20 (previously presented): The method of claim 7, wherein said diamide is present in said composition, in an amount of 0.001 to 50 wt. %.

Claim 21 (previously presented): The method of claim 7, wherein said composition further comprises an oily base.

Claim 22 (previously presented): The method of claim 21, wherein said oily base is at least one member selected from the group consisting of vegetable oils, animal oils, synthetic oils, fatty acids, natural glycerides and synthetic glycerides.

Claims 23-31 (canceled):